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# Sharp Questioning Awaits McFarlane

## *Role in Obtaining Contra Aid From Saudis a Likely Topic Today*

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Former national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane testifies today before the House and Senate committees investigating the Iran-contra affair and is expected to be rigorously cross-examined about contradictions between his past accounts of crucial elements in the case and other information available to the panels.

A major topic will be McFarlane's role in obtaining funds for the contras from Saudi Arabia after Congress passed the Boland Amendment, which barred any U.S. assistance—direct or indirect—to the Nicaraguan rebels.

McFarlane is expected to testify that he emphasized to the National Security Council staff that they were not to solicit, encourage or broker contributions to the contras. But the committees already have sworn testimony that McFarlane, in at least one instance, set the stage for Saudi contributions.

McFarlane told the Tower board in writing that "without solicitation," an unidentified foreign official offered \$1 million a month of his personal funds. At McFarlane's request, Lt. Col. Oliver L. North provided the official with the contra bank account number in Miami, McFarlane told the board. The official was Prince Bandar Bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador, according to sources.

Last week, however, retired major general Richard V. Secord identified McFarlane as the person who set the stage for Secord to solicit funds from a foreign ambassador in the fall of 1984 and again in February 1985. Although Secord did not name the ambassador, other sources have identified him as Bandar. Bandar has denied he was the source of any funds.

McFarlane originally told Congress last December that he had first heard about the Saudi payments to the contras from Pentagon

officials but made no mention of his own role. In January, however, McFarlane wrote several legislators telling them that he had played a role in the Saudi contribution, even to the point of giving Bandar the contra bank account number where the funds should be sent.

When asked by Washington Post reporter Jane Leavy two weeks ago about the incident, McFarlane said, "That's easily explained, but I've got to do it with Congress."

Copies of McFarlane's opening statement were made available to The Washington Post and The New York Times on Friday, embargoed until delivery to the committees today. The Times, however, obtained permission from McFarlane's lawyer, Leonard Garment, to use specific parts of it in a story that ran yesterday.

McFarlane plans to tell the congressional investigators that after Congress cut off military aid to the contras in October 1984, President Reagan ordered administration officials to give the contras moral support and to try to persuade Congress to restore aid.

McFarlane is expected to testify that he told North to be a visible sign of Reagan's strong personal support for the contras to help them become a viable political movement in Nicaragua. He also is expected to tell the committees that he emphasized to North and members of the NSC staff that they were to operate within the law.

McFarlane became national security adviser in October 1983, and was in that key position when the "private" contra support operation began. He also was instrumental in initiating the Iran operation in the summer and fall of 1985. After his resignation in December 1985, he continued to play a key role in the clandestine sale of arms to Iran including leading a secret delegation to Tehran in May 1986.

Although McFarlane continually voiced concern about the arms-for-hostages character of the Iran initiative, as late as October 1986 he told North he was prepared to take a month off to work on the project.

North also contacted him on contra matters on Oct. 12, 1986, according to the Tower report.

McFarlane has testified publicly more than any other principal in the Iran-contra affair. He attempted suicide last February.

Some do not expect the committee members to go easy on McFarlane, however.

"He's going to have to answer for a lot of actions that he undertook when he was NSC adviser and will have to answer some tough questions," said Rep. Dick Cheney (R-Wyo.), ranking Republican member of the House select investigating committee, speaking on CBS News' "Face the Nation." "I don't expect the committee to go too gentle on him. There are legitimate areas of concern that we can only respond to or find answers to if we have got the opportunity to really grill him."

While Secord testified that he was constantly in need of more money for his operations, McFarlane is expected to testify that because of the funds from Saudi Arabia, the contras didn't need additional funds to keep going.

However, the committees are expected to introduce messages from North to McFarlane in 1985 and 1986 that repeatedly discuss funding needs, and then ask McFarlane about his assuring Congress in 1985 that North was not involved in fund-raising.

In an Oct. 7, 1985, letter to Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.), then chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and currently chairman of the House investigating committee, McFarlane wrote: "There is no official or unofficial relationship with any member of the NSC staff regarding fund-raising for the Nicaraguan democratic opposition."

McFarlane is expected to testify today that that denial was too categorical.

The Tower board found that North turned to McFarlane for help in obtaining British-made anti-aircraft weapons called Blowpipes for the contras and that McFarlane in turn sent an April 4, 1986, message to North seeking information from the Central Intelligence Agency that could help him find a contact to help North get the weapons.

In the same message, according to the Tower report, McFarlane asked: "Anything I can do? If for any reason, you need some mortars or other artillery—which I doubt—please let me know."

Confronted with that message by the Tower board, McFarlane responded that he was only giving advice and not suggesting he would assist in their purchase.

Reagan, who gave the commencement address at Tuskegee University in Alabama yesterday, declined to comment on reports of McFarlane's testimony.

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*Staff writer Dan Morgan contributed to this report.*

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